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## PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM FUTURE FLOOD DAMAGE

**NEWINGTON, N.H.** – As cleanup continues in the aftermath of the heavy rains and flooding that struck New Hampshire during the month of May, state and federal officials urge disaster victims to take measures to prevent the damage from happening again.

Since the flooding began in mid May, many residents of the six declared counties (Belknap, Carroll, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham and Strafford) have registered for disaster assistance by calling the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) toll-free registration number **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY). Those still cleaning up are asking: "How can I keep this from happening again?"

There are simple, inexpensive ways to prevent or reduce future flood damage. FEMA calls such actions hazard mitigation.

While some mitigation measures such as acquisition of structures or elevation of buildings are costly, long-term projects, there are simple home improvements that residents of flood-prone areas can make to help themselves.

"It's safer, cheaper, and ultimately much easier to limit future destruction than to repair it again and again," Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Clark said. "The rebuilding phase of a disaster is the ideal time to consider ways to limit future damage."

"Many of these projects can be completed by the homeowner, but some of the more complicated repairs may require a licensed contractor," said Mike Poirier, state coordinating officer for the New Hampshire Bureau of Emergency Management. "Check with local building officials to ensure that all work done is up to local code."

Several suggestions to keep damages from happening follow:

Relocate or elevate water heaters, furnaces, and major appliances. Water heaters, furnaces and
appliances such as washers and dryers in the basement can be elevated on a masonry or pressure-treated
wood base at least 12 inches above the previous high-water mark or the base flood elevation.
Appliances can also be moved to the first or second floor. Some heating systems can be suspended from
the basement ceiling.

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- Elevate or relocate electrical systems. Electrical panel boxes, circuit breakers, wall switches, and wall outlets should be relocated at least 12 inches above flood level or even moved to a higher floor. A licensed electrician familiar with local codes should be hired to do this work. An uninterrupted electrical supply will allow the homeowner to move back to the home more quickly after a flood.
- Install a septic backflow valve. Flooded septic systems can force sewage back into the home. Not only
  is this an unpleasant experience, it also presents a health risk. Backflow valves can be installed inside or
  outside the structure but must conform to local building codes.
- Build interior and exterior floodwalls. A watertight masonry floodwall can be constructed to enclose furnaces, utilities, and appliances on the lowest floor of the building. On the outside, a similar wall could be constructed around the perimeter of the basement opening to keep water from entering.
- Anchor your fuel tank. Fuel tanks, either inside or outside the home, should be anchored to prevent them from overturning or breaking loose in a flood. Metal straps and bolts should be non-corrosive, and wood structural supports should be pressure treated.

Funding for hazard mitigation projects may be available to victims of the recent floods who qualify for U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest loans. SBA may increase a disaster recovery loan by up to 20 percent if the funds are used for mitigation projects to protect the house from future flood damage. For more information about hazard mitigation, visit the FEMA Web site at <a href="www.fema.gov">www.fema.gov</a> or call the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) toll-free line, **1-888-CALL-FLOOD.** 

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FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 200.3

The N.H. Bureau of Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating the state's emergency response to major natural and man-made disasters. Editors: For more information visit <a href="www.fema.gov">www.fema.gov</a> or <a href="www.nhoem.state.nh.us">www.nhoem.state.nh.us</a>